



Jan van Goyen
Dutch, 1596 - 1656

View of Dordrecht from the North

early 1650s

oil on canvas

overall: 63.1 × 87.2 cm (24 13/16 × 34 5/16 in.)

framed: 92.7 × 116.2 × 12.7 cm (36 1/2 × 45 3/4 × 5 in.)

Inscription: lower right on the bow of the boat: V G 165[illegible numeral]

Corcoran Collection (William A. Clark Collection) 2014.136.34

ENTRY

Billowing clouds sweeping across the sky help create the dynamic character of Jan van Goyen's engaging portrayal of the lively waterways near Dordrecht. [1] While sailboats and dinghies filled with men and women come and go, the most active elements of the painting are the shifting patterns of light and shade passing over this watery domain. Van Goyen captured these atmospheric qualities by employing quick and fluid brushwork, by silhouetting foreground figures and their boats against sunlit waters beyond, and by juxtaposing the distant city profile against the white clouds nestled against the horizon. While Van Goyen clearly depicted all of the distinctive landmarks along the banks of the river Merwede looking toward Dordrecht, the essence of the painting is not its topography, but rather the character of the air and the human activities occurring at the confluence of rivers surrounding this important and historic Dutch city.

Van Goyen was intimately familiar with the location he depicted; he painted about 70 views of Dordrecht and its environs over the course of his long career. [2] The artist clearly reveled in capturing the city's bustling harbors, filled with tall-masted ships, and its distinctive profile. Although he also painted views of other urban

centers, including Leiden, The Hague, Rheden, Arnhem, and Antwerp, none of these cities captured his imagination as much as did Dordrecht. In this view, Van Goyen portrayed all of Dordrecht's major towers and spires, including those of the Groothoofdspoor at the far left; the town hall, which is visible to the right of the foreground sailboat; the Nieuwe Kerk, with its tall pointed spire; the massive Grote Kerk; and, just to its right, the Vuylpoort. [3] These structures, individually and cumulatively, signified Dordrecht's importance within the Dutch Republic as a mercantile, civic, and religious center. Nevertheless, while Van Goyen's arrangement of the individual buildings is essentially correct, he enlarged the scale of the Grote Kerk and stretched out topographical elements to create a more compelling and panoramic image of the city than existed in reality.

This work, painted in the 1650s, is among the last of Van Goyen's many views of Dordrecht. [4] The city, situated at the juncture of two major rivers, the Oude Maas and the Merwede, provided the artist a range of possibilities for depicting patterns of daily life on these prominent waterways. Over the years, the artist visited the area a number of times, and he drew his impressions, often in black chalk, in sketchbooks that he carried with him on his travels throughout the Netherlands. [5] Some of these drawings depict the city as seen from a distance, but occasionally Van Goyen focused on individual buildings, such as the Grote Kerk [fig. 1]. Many of his quickly rendered drawings also feature boats and human activities taking place on and near the water. He judiciously selected from and adapted these drawings to enliven his paintings, with the result that his landscapes are composites of his firsthand experiences. They do not record a specific moment in time, no matter how immediate they may seem. Even though one finds, for example, many of the same compositional elements in different paintings, including ferries loading and unloading passengers, dinghies, fishermen, and sailboats gliding past distant shores, Van Goyen always imaginatively rearranged them in new and varied combinations.

Van Goyen had two preferred locations for his views of Dordrecht: one in the southwest, at the juncture of the Oude Maas and Dordtse Kil, as in the Gallery's painting of 1644 [fig. 2], and one in the north, at the juncture of the Oude Maas and the Merwede, as is the case here. [6] From each location, Van Goyen could capture boat traffic passing along this interconnected network of rivers, with Dordrecht serving as the backdrop. Similar ferries operated all over the network of waterways in the Low Countries, transporting people, goods, and animals. The strategic location of Dordrecht for waterborne transportation is particularly evident in *View*

of *Dordrecht from the North*, for from this vantage point one clearly sees the rivers flowing by the city both on the left (the Merwede) and on the right (the Oude Maas) [fig. 3] [fig. 4]. From this location Van Goyen could create scenarios that would have occurred on a daily basis, and ones that would have been recognizable to his clientele: large ferryboats filled to the brim with travelers, boarding and discharging passengers at the juncture of these waterways. [7] In this painting, a small rowboat with a man in the bow holding a wooden pole approaches the ferry to deliver some passengers, while a somewhat larger and more fully loaded launch ferries its occupants to their destination, perhaps Zwijndrecht, a nearby village situated along the Oude Maas.

The broad compositional similarities among many of Van Goyen's views of Dordrecht provide a fascinating framework for assessing his stylistic evolution from the 1630s to the 1650s. A comparison between the Gallery's two paintings of Dordrecht, executed about a decade apart, is particularly revealing. In 1644, when Van Goyen painted the first of these two works [fig. 2], he was in the midst of his tonal phase. He chose a panel support, rendered his quiet scene in a muted range of ochers and grays, and used translucencies of paint to create subtle reflections of boats, buildings, and even the sky across the water's surface. By the 1650s, his approach had evolved. Here, using the rougher textures of a canvas support, he applied his paints more thickly and vigorously. Compositional elements have become larger and have more lively rhythms, as in the ferry with its billowing sail. Most importantly, Van Goyen added color to his palette and introduced stronger contrasts of light and dark. The blue sky and clouds have become dynamic elements: not only do they evoke a sense of wind and air, but they also draw the eye into the painting's depth. Van Goyen reinforced this directional thrust by placing the tip of the ferryboat's sail (with its Dutch pennant) at the very juncture of the large diagonal cloud formations receding into the distance, thus directing the eye toward Dordrecht, the boat's destination.

The evolution of Van Goyen's style reflects broader tendencies in Dutch landscape painting around mid-century, particularly as seen in the work of Aelbert Cuyp (Dutch, 1620 - 1691). [8] Not only did these artists know each other's landscapes, but they also painted comparable views in which Dutch cities, particularly Dordrecht, served as backdrops for depictions of daily life. Their images were inevitably positive and often depicted travelers being transported in wooden ferries alongside local fishermen busy in dinghies. As in this view of Dordrecht, each of their paintings conveys a great deal of local pride, not only in a city's

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distinctive character and heritage, but also in the natural beauty of its surroundings.

Arthur K. Wheelock Jr.

May 7, 2019

COMPARATIVE FIGURES



fig. 1 Jan van Goyen, *View of the Grote Kerk, in Dordrecht*, c. 1648, black chalk, pen, and black ink, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam, JvG 7



fig. 2 Jan van Goyen, *View of Dordrecht from the Dordtse Kil*, 1644, oil on panel, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund



fig. 3 Detail, Nicolaas Visscher II, *Hollandiae Pars Meridionalior, vulgo Zuid-Holland (Atlas van der Hagen)*, Amsterdam, before 1680, copper engraving, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague



fig. 4 Joan Blaeu, *Plan of Dordrecht*, 1652, etching, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv. RP-P-AO-14-33-1

NOTES

- [1] I would like to thank Henriette Rahusen for her thoughtful comments on this text.
- [2] See Peter C. Sutton, *Reclaimed: Paintings from the Collection of Jacques Goudstikker* (Greenwich, CT, 2008), 182, for a list of these paintings, which he derived from Hans-Ulrich Beck, *Jan van Goyen, 1596–1656: ein Oeuvreverzeichnis*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam, 1972–1973).
- [3] Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann, “Jan van Goyen in the Corcoran: Exemplars of Dutch Naturalism,” in *The William A. Clark Collection* (Washington, DC, 1978), 51–59, particularly 57–58.
- [4] The last digit of the date in the inscription is uncertain, but probably is a “2,” indicating a date of 1652.
- [5] For an image of Van Goyen’s black-chalk drawing of Dordrecht, c. 1648, in his so-called “Dresden sketchbook,” see fig. 2 in Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., “Jan van Goyen, *View of Dordrecht from the Dortse Kil*, 1644,” *Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century*, NGA Online Editions, <https://purl.org/nga/collection/artobject/56597>. The entire Dresden sketchbook is published in Hans-Ulrich Beck, *Jan van Goyen, 1596–1656: ein Oeuvreverzeichnis*, vol. 1, *Einführung; Katalog der Handzeichnungen*

(Amsterdam, 1972), no. 846.

- [6] The choice of this location was one that had an important precedent: the massive panoramic view of Dordrecht that Adam Willaerts (1577–1664) painted on commission from the city fathers in 1629. See Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., *Aelbert Cuyp* (Washington, 2001), 23, fig. 8.
- [7] For a stylistically similar image of a ferry boat transferring passengers, in this instance from the southwest, at the juncture of the Oude Maas and Dordtse Kil, see Peter C. Sutton, *Reclaimed: Paintings from the Collection of Jacques Goudstikker* (Greenwich, CT, 2008), 180–183, cat. no. 23. This panel painting, dated 1651, was acquired by the Dordrechts Museum in 2008.
- [8] The parallels between Van Goyen's stylistic evolution and that of Aelbert Cuyp are many, particularly in their views of Dordrecht. For Cuyp's stylistic evolution and illustrations of a number of his views of Dordrecht, see Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., *Aelbert Cuyp* (Washington, 2001).
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TECHNICAL SUMMARY

The primary support is a plain-weave canvas that was relined onto plain-weave linen with a fiber-mat interleaf using wax-resin adhesive. The lining canvas is secured to an expansion-bolt stretcher with staples along the tacking edges. This non-original secondary support extends beyond the tacking margins and is adhered to the back of the stretcher with the same wax-resin mixture used for the lining. The threads of the primary support are visible in the x-radiograph of the painting, and the canvas has approximately 18 threads per centimeter in the vertical direction and 15 threads per centimeter in the horizontal direction. [1] The original tacking edges have been trimmed, but strong original cusping is present along all the edges, indicating that the painting's dimensions have not been significantly altered.

The ground layer is thin and buff colored. The paint medium is estimated to be oil and was applied thinly without impasto. The artist first painted the sky and water, applying the paints wet into wet. The other elements and details were painted next, wet into wet, on top of the drier paint layers. This is evidenced in the infrared reflectogram, where the cloud formation is easily visible behind the largest sail and the highlights of the water can be seen through the boats. [2] In normal light, the lower paint layers are also easily visible through other compositional elements due to the thin quality of the paint layers.

Overall, the painting is in good condition. There are scattered small losses and several linear scratches. Most of these damages are covered in retouching, which is heaviest along the edges. The varnish coatings appear even, and under ultraviolet radiation they have a slightly hazy fluorescence. There are green-fluorescent natural-resin residues scattered around the edges and in the foreground.

Dina Anchin

May 7, 2019

TECHNICAL NOTES

- [1] X-radiography was carried out with a Comet Technologies XRP-75MXR-75HP tube, and the images were digitally captured using a Carestream Industrex Blue Digital Imaging Plate 5537 (14 × 17 in.). The parameters were 20 kV, 5 mA, 40 seconds, and 100.25 in. distance (from source to plate). The resulting digital images were composited and processed using Adobe Photoshop CS5.
- [2] Infrared reflectography was carried out using a Santa Barbara Focalplane InSb camera filtered to 1.1–1.4 microns (J filter).
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PROVENANCE

(Sale, Amsterdam, 24 September 1777, no. 43);[1] Vermeulen.[2] (sale, Amsterdam, 11 July 1798, no. 38); Gruyter.[3] Samuel S. Scheikévitch [1842-1908], Moscow and Paris; (sale, Frederik Muller & Cie, Amsterdam, 30 April-2 May 1907, 1st day, no. 82, as *Vue de Dordrecht*). (Trotti & Co., Paris); half-share sold July 1908 to (M. Knoedler & Co., New York); purchased 22 December 1908 by William Andrews Clark [1839-1925], New York, as *Shipping Scene*:[4] bequest April 1926 to the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington; acquired 2014 by the National Gallery of Art.

[1] The early provenance through the 1907 sale is according to Cornelis Hofstede de Groot, *Beschreibendes und kritisches Verzeichnis der Werke der hervorragendsten holländischen Maler des XVII. Jahrhunderts*, 10 vols., Esslingen and Paris, 1907-1928: 8(1923): 19, no. 50.

[2] The buyer's name is in an annotated catalogue of the 1777 sale in the Frick Art Reference Library, New York; copy in NGA curatorial files. The buyer was possibly Cornelis Vermeulen (1732-1813), a Dordrecht art dealer, painter, illustrator, and copyist.

[3] A copy from an annotated catalogue of the 1798 sale is in NGA curatorial files. The buyer was probably Willem Gruyter, Sr., a collector and dealer in Amsterdam.

[4] The painting is stock number 11653 in the M. Knoedler & Co. Records, accession number 2012.M.54, Research Library, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles: Painting Stockbook 5, 1899 April – 1911 December, p. 160; Sales Book 9, 1907 May – 1912 January, p. 90; copies in NGA curatorial files.

EXHIBITION HISTORY

1909 The Hudson-Fulton Celebration: Collection of Paintings by Dutch Masters of the Seventeenth Century, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1909, no. 19 (three publications; entries in 2 vol. 1909 catalogue and 1910 catalogue include reprints and have the dimensions of no. 18, NGA 2014.136.33).

1978 Romance and Reality: Aspects of Landscape Painting. For the Benefit of the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, Wildenstein & Co., New York, October 1978, no. 33.

1978 The William A. Clark Collection: An exhibition marking the 50th Anniversary of the installation of The Clark Collection at The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, 1978, catalogue without checklist.

1989 The William A. Clark Collection: Treasures of a Copper King, Yellowstone Art Center, Billings, Montana; Montana Historical Society, Helena, 1989, unnumbered checklist.


2001 Antiquities to Impressionism: The William A. Clark Collection, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, 2001-2002, catalogue without checklist.

2018

Water, Wind, and Waves: Marine Paintings from the Dutch Golden Age, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 2018, unnumbered brochure.

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- 1909 Valentiner, Wilhelm R. *Catalogue of a collection of paintings by Dutch masters of the seventeenth century*. The Hudson-Fulton Celebration 1. Exh. cat. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1909: 20, no. 19, repro.
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- 1925 Carroll, Dana H. *Catalogue of Objects of Fine Art and Other Properties at the Home of William Andrews Clark, 962 Fifth Avenue*. Part I. Unpublished manuscript, n.d. (1925): 132, no. 71.
- 1927 Volhard, Hans. *Die Grundtypen der Landschaftsbilder Jan van Goyens und ihre Entwicklung*. Frankfurt am Main, 1927: 163, 188.
- 1928 Corcoran Gallery of Art. *Illustrated Handbook of the W.A. Clark Collection*. Washington, 1928: 42.
- 1932 Corcoran Gallery of Art. *Illustrated Handbook of the W.A. Clark Collection*. Washington, 1932: 47.
- 1955 Breckenridge, James. D. *A Handbook of Dutch and Flemish Paintings in the William Andrews Clark Collection*. Washington, 1955: 20, repro.
- 1973 Beck, Hans-Ulrich. *Jan van Goyen, 1596-1656: ein Oeuvreverzeichnis*. 4 vols. Vol. 2: Katalog der Gemälde. Amsterdam, 1973: 2: 153, no. 311, repro.
- 1978 Sutton, Denys. *Romance and Reality: Aspects of Landscape Painting. For the Benefit of the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center*. Exh. cat. New York, Wildenstein & Co. New York, 1978: 18-19, nos. 21 and 33, repro.

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- 1986 Sutton, Peter C. *A Guide to Dutch Art in America*. Washington and Grand Rapids, 1986: 299.
- 1989 Lewis, Hall, ed. *The William A. Clark Collection: Treasures of a Copper King*. Exh. cat. Billings, Yellowstone Art Center, Billings; Helena, Montana Historical Society, Helena. Billings, 1989: 7, 42, repro.
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